

One of the most important documents in our nation's history, the Declaration of Independence, specifically addresses civil rights: equality among individuals and the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But while these truths might be "self-evident," we have to work hard to make sure they're fulfilled.

The Golden Rule is a great rule to live by, and more of us need to practice it. I pride myself on the work I have done in support of civil rights and I will continue to speak out on these issues whenever I have the opportunity, both in Washington and on the Central Coast.

Bills I have cosponsored during the 111th Congress (2009-2010):

- [H.R. 2517](#) - Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act of 2009 - Gives domestic partners of federal employees the same benefits -- and requires of them the same obligations -- as the spouses of federal employees.
- [H.R. 1913](#) - Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 - (Sec. 2) Adopts the definition of "hate crime" as set forth in the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (i.e., a crime in which the defendant intentionally selects a victim, or in the case of a property crime, the property that is the object of the crime, because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person).
- [H.R. 104](#) - To establish a national commission on presidential war powers and civil liberties - Establishes the National Commission on Presidential War Powers and Civil Liberties to investigate, and report to the President and Congress on, the broad range of policies of the Bush Administration that were undertaken under claims of unreviewable war powers, including: (1) detention by the Armed Forces and the intelligence community; (2) the use by such entities of enhanced interrogation techniques or techniques not authorized by the Uniform Code of Military Justice; (3) "ghosting" or other policies intended to conceal an individual's capture or detention; (4) extraordinary rendition; and (5) domestic warrantless electronic surveillance.
- [H.CON.RES. 92](#) - Supporting the goals and ideals of the National Day of Silence - Supports the goals and ideals of the Day of Silence (during which students vow to remain silent to bring attention to the harassment and discrimination faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in schools). Encourages each state, city, and local education authority to adopt laws and policies to prohibit name-calling, bullying, harassment, and discrimination against students, teachers, and other school staff regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity or gender expression.

Key actions taken during the 111th Congress:

- On April 23, 2009, I spoke on the House Floor in honor of the National Day of Silence, an event that brings attention to anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools. You can read my statement [here](#) watch the video [here](#) .

Key actions taken during the 110th Congress (2007-2008):

- In September 2008, the president signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 ([S. 3406](#)). This major civil rights law overturns four erroneous Supreme Court decisions that have eroded the protections for people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, restoring original Congressional intent.

- The president also signed the Emmitt Till Unsolved Crimes Act ([H.R. 923](#)) in October 2008. This legislation establishes an Unsolved Crimes Section in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice with the mission of solving civil rights-era murders that remain unsolved.